

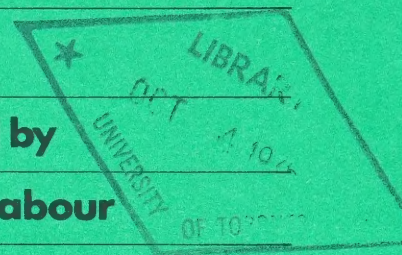
WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

"CHILD CARE"

NO. 4 in a series of factsheets produced by

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PREAMBLE

Historically, the assumption has been made that children are the responsibility of their mother who will care for them in the family home. Today, however, more than ever before, there are many couples with children where both husband and wife are in the labour force, as well as an increasing number of sole-support parents, male and female.

Because women traditionally were responsible for the care of their own children, it is often assumed that child-care is a "woman's issue" and thus "a woman's responsibility." In fact, in a two-parent family where both husband and wife are working, child-care must be seen as a parental responsibility. When women worked within the home, producing goods and services, child-care was one of many functions within that domain. When they leave the home, however, it should no longer be assumed that women will maintain all of their former responsibilities in addition to assuming new ones.

Economic forecasts predict that the participation rate of women in the labour force will continue to grow and one indicator points to such increasing work force activity by women as a key to maintaining Canada's economic growth rate.⁽¹⁾ Figures from other jurisdictions show that Canada is behind comparably industrialized nations (e.g. Britain, Sweden and the United States) vis à vis the percentage of women working.

If, as predicted, the female labour force increases, one can assume at least a proportionate increase in the number of couples where both partners work and thus an increase in demand for child-care facilities. Additionally, the single parent needs the support such facilities provide.

Already options are being advanced by concerned groups and individuals. In addition to the promotion of more day care centres, proposals include industrial child-care (i.e., at the workplace of one parent), private home care (i.e., paid care of a small number of children by a woman who wishes to remain in the home) and community

school child-care, where centres would be linked to existing educational facilities. Whatever the solutions, it is evident that society must adapt to the changing role of women. The traditional assumption that women alone are responsible for child-care is being eroded as increasingly both mothers and fathers are active in the labour force.

WORKING WOMEN

The number of women working in Ontario has increased dramatically in the past two decades. Marked social change has occurred as more and more women have entered the paid labour force.

TABLE ONE
Women in the Ontario Labour Force
and Their Participation Rates

Number		Participation Rates
496,000	1954	27%
776,000	1964	34%
1,319,000	1974	43%

The highest level of participation for women is in the 20-24 year old age bracket. Less expected perhaps is the fact that over half of all women aged 25-44 are also in the labour force. These years were previously often called the childbearing and childrearing years but today those two functions no longer exclude the possibility of working outside the home. In 1953, 23% of all women in the 25-44 age bracket were working. By 1974, this figure had doubled to 46.6%.

One of the greatest changes in the labour force has been in the numbers of married women choosing to either remain in the paid work force or re-enter it after an absence of some years. In 1951, only 15% of married women in Ontario worked outside the home. This figure doubled to 31.6% in 1966 and increased further to 41.6% in 1974. By the latter year, 62.2% or almost two-thirds of the female labour force were married.

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The two factors given above, increased labour force participation by women aged 25-44 and by married women, have contributed to a change in attitude toward the commitment a woman will make to a job. No longer can the assumption be made that she will work only until she marries or has her first child. In addition to such attitudinal change, the presence in the labour force of married women, often with children, has led to an unprecedented discussion of child-care needs.

WORKING MOTHERS IN ONTARIO(2)

In 1973, there were 973,000 women between the ages of 20 and 54 working in Ontario.* Of these women, 166,000 had pre-school children (i.e., less than 5 years of age). An additional 279,000 had at least one child between 6 and 16. Table Two demonstrates that as the age of the youngest child increases so does the likelihood that the mother is in the labour force. Even when the youngest child is less than 2, however, over one-quarter of the mothers are working outside the home.

TABLE TWO

Labour Force Data and Participation Rates
for Women Aged 20-54* by Age of Youngest Child,
Ontario 1973

Age of Youngest Child	No. of Women in Labour Force	Participation Rate
Under 2 years	59,000	26.7%
2-5 years	107,000	35.3%
6-16 years	279,000	48.3%
No child under 16	528,000	69.8%
TOTAL	973,000	52.4%

*We deal with this restricted age group to avoid distortion of the data. Inclusion of women younger than 20 or older than 54 over-weights the number of women with no children who are under the age of 16 and includes many young women who are still in school.

CHILDREN OF WORKING MOTHERS

Examination of statistics concerning numbers of mothers working reveals obvious changes in the role of women. More important in discussing child-care is to discover how many children these mothers represent.

In Canada in 1973, there were 518,000 children under 6 years of age with working mothers. Of these children, 206,000, or almost 40%, lived in Ontario.

TABLE THREE

Number of Children (Aged Under 16)
of Working Mothers by Age of Child, Ontario 1973

Age Group of Child	Numbers
Under 2 years	63,000
2-5 years	143,000
6-16 years	689,000
TOTAL	895,000

WORK ARRANGEMENTS

The presence of infants can be shown to affect full-time, full-year work by the mother. As the age of the youngest child increases so does the probability that the mother will work a full work year.

TABLE FOUR

Age Group of Youngest Child
by Work Arrangements of Mother, Canada 1973

Work Arrangements	All Children in School Full-time	Youngest is Pre-schooler, Not Infant	Youngest Is Infant	Total
Full-year/full-time	38.6%	30.7%	18.2%	33.1%
Part-year/part-time	55.1%	61.7%	70.7%	59.5%
TOTAL (3)	100%	100%	100%	100%

Of all mothers with children under 16, 33.1% work full-year, full-time. This number drops to 18.2% for mothers whose youngest child is an infant.

CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

A) FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

Working mothers with school-age children face special problems. Although their children are in class for most of the work day, it is often necessary to provide supervision for lunchtimes and the period between the end of the school day and parents' return from work. This kind of intermittent care is often difficult to obtain and most often parents must arrange informal (and sometimes unreliable) methods of care for school-age children.

TABLE FIVE
Child Care Arrangements
for School-Age Children, Canada 1973

Type of Arrangement	Ages of all Children in Family	
	School-age Only	School-age and Pre-schoolers
Unpaid care ⁽⁴⁾	36%	42%
Children care for themselves	46%	14%
Paid Care	11%	33%
Other	8%	11%
TOTAL	100%	100%

The child-care arrangements made for school-age children vary according to whether there are also pre-schoolers in the family. When there are no pre-schoolers, the largest percentage of children look after themselves (46%). Only 14% are left alone when there are younger siblings not yet at school. The most common form of care for school-age children if there are pre-schoolers, is unpaid. Often they are included at no extra charge in the arrangement made for the pre-schooler. A total of 42% of all arrangements fall in this category. The incidence of paid care is three times as high when there are pre-schoolers (33%) than in their absence (11%).

B) FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS

There are marked differences in the child care arrangements for pre-schoolers compared to children of school age. This is readily explained by a number of factors. Firstly, pre-schoolers are younger and thus require more care and supervision. Secondly, pre-schoolers require care for the whole day and thus arrangements must be of a more formal nature.

TABLE SIX
Child Care Arrangements
for Preschoolers, Canada 1973

Type of Arrangement	Children in school part-time	Children not in school
Work oriented (i.e., child goes to work with parent or mother only works if child in school)	14%	5%
Unpaid care	44%	30%
Paid care	33%	57%
Other	—	8%
TOTAL ⁽³⁾	100%	100%

Distinct differences exist between arrangements made for children who attend school part-time (e.g. nursery school) and those who are never in school. The latter group is most often involved in paid care arrangements whereas unpaid care predominates for the former.

Paid care takes three different forms for pre-schoolers, the most common being paid care in the home of the sitter.

TABLE SEVEN
Paid Care Arrangements for Pre-schoolers
Canada and Ontario 1973

Type of Paid Care	CANADA		ONTARIO
	Children in school part-time	Children not in school*	Children not in school*
In mother's home	26,000	72,000	24,000
In home of sitter	30,000	103,000	} 49,000
Day care centre or nursery	—	24,000	
TOTAL ⁽³⁾	63,000	198,000	73,000

*full-time care required

In summary, one can conclude that child-care arrangements vary directly with the age of the child and length of care desired. Formal, paid arrangements are most common among pre-schoolers, while less formal predominate for children in school. Typically, the latter group either look after themselves or are cared for by neighbours or relatives.

Footnotes:

- (1) Economic Council of Canada, Twelfth Annual Review.
- (2) For all recent statistical information on working mothers in Ontario and Canada, we have referred to a study done in October 1973 by the Manpower Research and Development Section, Labour Division, Statistics Canada. Much of the material can be found in Catalogue 71-001 (September, 1975), The Labour Force—Feature: Working Mothers and their Child Care Arrangements. It is unfortunate that only this one data source was used. However, this illustrates the dearth of statistical information available on mothers in the labour force. With the exception of this one study, most other factual material concentrates on the availability of and demand for day-care facilities, omitting reference to the broader issues such as how many children actually need care while their parents work and how many parents face the problem of locating adequate child care.
- (3) Totals do not add to 100% due to non-response and technical problems.
- (4) In this study, unpaid care refers to care by a person over 15 living at home, a brother or sister under 16 or a neighbour or relative.



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